INDIA AT INTERMISSION

India Delaney Hillman

One of Somerset's most interesting inhabitants has left town. For Marie Wallace this has been a blessing in disguise

SOMERSET

"I'm very productive in the morning and can get lots done . . ."

Marie Wallace

The life of an actress in the helter skelter world of daytime television has the same kind of ups and downs that anyone's life has. Sometimes, though, just when things seem most hectic, the work comes to a sudden halt. Ever wonder just what a daytime star does when his, or in this case, her, character is temporarily written out of the action? How does she spend those long days away from the TV treadmill? This is how one active lady, Marie Wallace, has decided to fill her free hours.

Marie is the lovely star of *Somerset*, and with the current introduction of a new plot line, her character of India Delaney Hillman is currently on a round-the-world trip—one that will come to a swift conclusion any time the producers and writers decide to reinstate her as the Queen Bee of Somerset society.

I visited Marie recently in her tastefully elegant New York apartment, and over a gracious lunch we talked about this subject, which for many actors would be a sensitive theme. Unlike many stars, Marie's life doesn't center around her career, though. She loves the work, but there's a variety of other interests in her life, and so when she's not doing a role she still enjoys many of life's pleasures.

Dressed in a black velvet pants suit and printed silk shirt, Marie served a lunch of one of her favorite Greek dishes, *spanikotiropita*—a combination of spinach and feta cheese, baked in a delicate pastry shell. It's hard to pronounce but awfully easy to eat!

Even now that she's temporarily away from the daily grind of her series, Marie remains an early riser. "I hate the idea of missing half the day by sleeping late," she explained. "I'm able to do my own food shopping now and take all the time I need to get the freshest things. That in itself can take two good mornings a week. And I've had time to work on my apartment," she said, pointing to the ceiling. I looked up and saw that it was sprinkled with brightly colored spring flowers in little clusters. The effect was charming, and the contrast between the whimsical ceiling renderings and the quietly elegant spirit of the rest of the room revealed another of Marie's most winning assets, her sense of humor.

"One day I painted one flower up there and liked it so much that I just continued. My fiance and I did it together, actually. I haven't had time to do much real painting lately, but I did have six canvases in an actors benefit exhibit and sold two of them to

By PATRICK AGAN

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Marie's fiance, Chris Stamatiou, helped her decorate her very lovely apartment.

Ethel Merman. I was delighted about that."

Marie's main interest of the moment, however, is her sewing, which is another reason she likes to be up early. "I'm very productive in the morning and can get lots done." Since I'd last seen Marie, she'd temporarily converted her dining room into a sewing workroom and the results so far are terrific. Hanging on the wall was an almost finished white shirt for her fiance, Chris Stamatiou. In fact she was putting finishing touches on it when I arrived. She also modeled an outfit that she'd made for herself, a rust-colored pants suit. I had to admit it looked more like something from a Fifth Avenue boutique than a homemade effort.

"I've got a whole batch of designs I want to do," she said. "I enjoy being stylish when I'm out and people can see me. I feel it's part of my profession to look good and I'm happy when I do. It's all part of being an actor, I guess—the need for approval. With the clothes I'm making now, I'm sticking to really simple, clean lines but good basic design. I like elegant clothes, but I think women should look natural; their clothes shouldn't wear them, if you know what I mean. When I'm not performing I wear very little make-up."

Before *Somerset*, Marie had a part on *Dark Shadows*, and before that were a string of off-Broadway and Broadway shows. I asked her how she liked playing India Hillman, the lady who always gets what she wants.

"You know," she said, "India has never gone out of her way to make trouble for anyone. She's simply a perfectionist who likes having things go exactly the way she chooses them to, although if you watch the show you know they don't always do that. She's a determined woman, though, and I always enjoy meeting people in restaurants or department stores and watching their reaction when they recognize me. 'My God—you can smile,' they'll say, and then they ask when I'll be back on the show. The public sees us every day in the privacy of their homes, whether they're sick or well, and they consider us a part of their daily lives. We're quite human and real to them, and I'm gratified that they miss me."

Marie's hospitality is the kind that people write books about. She makes one feel like an old and valued friend with her very gracious and unselfconscious manner. I'm sure many viewers are thinking of her fondly these days—and she is thinking of you.